

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 CU-02 INT-05 FEA-01 /092 W
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R 192010Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3145

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KINGSTON 5054

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JM

SUBJECT: ELECTION FEVER GROWS

REF: KINGSTON 4914

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: POLITICAL ACTIVITY CONT-
INUES TO

INCREASE, AND THERE IS GOOD REASON TO EXPECT THAT THE DATE
FOR ELECTIONS WILL BE ANNOUNCED BY PRIME MINISTER MANLEY
THIS COMING WEEKEND. BOTH PARTIES ARE NOW VERY MUCH ON
THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL; UCMURPRISINGLY, THE PNP
IS STRESSING THE BOONS IT HAS CONFERRED ON
THE MASSES WHILE THE JLP
CONDEMNS THE RULING PARTY FOR MISMANAGING THE ECONOMY
IN ITS PURSUIT OF SOCIALISM AND POWER. THE NEW
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES ARE EXPECTED SOON, AND AS SOON AS
THEY ARE ANNOUNCED, CANDIDATES CAN BE NOMINATED.
ON THE BASIS OF CANDIDACIES ALREADY KNOWN, THE PNP
WILL BE CAMPAIGNING AS MUCH ON EXPERIENCE AS
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PROGRAM; THE JLP, WITH MANY MORE NEWCOMERS TO

THE PARLIAMENTARY SCENE, WILL HAVE TO RELY ON PROGRAM AND ASSIDUOUS CULTIVATION OF INDIVIDUAL CONSTITUENCIES. END SUMMARY.

2. POLITICAL ACTIVITY HAS CONTINUED TO INCREASE IN THE WEEK SINCE PRE-ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS WERE SURVEYED IN THE REFERENCED TELEGRAM. HOWEVER, THE KEY DEVELOPMENTS REQUIRED TO PUT THE ELECTORAL PROCESS INTO ACTION STILL LIE AHEAD. THE NEW DELIMITATION OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES HAS NOT YET BEEN FINISHED BUT SHOULD BE COMPLETED WITHIN DAYS. NEITHER THE RULING PEOPLE NATIONAL PARTY (PNP) NOR THE OPPOSITION JAMAICA LABOUR PARTY (JLP) HAVE BEEN ABLE TO NOMINATE THEIR PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES FORMALLY--THIS REQUIRES THE RECONSTITUTION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES--BUT MOST ARE ALREADY KNOWN. AND, OF COURSE, THE ACTUAL DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT AND THE SELECTION OF AN ELECTION DAY LIE AHEAD, BUT IN THE MINDS OF MOST OBSERVERS NOT VERY FAR AHEAD. IN FACT, THERE IS A STRONG FEELING THAT ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21, WE WILL HEAR THE DATE.

3. NOTWITHSTANDING THE SEVERAL KEY STEPS WHICH MUST YET BE TAKEN, THE CHARACTER OF THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEGUN TO EMERGE. THE PNP MUST, OF COURSE, RUN ON ITS RECORD. THUS, IT HAS BEGUN A PRESS, RADIO AND TELEVISION CAMPAIGN WHICH IS INTENDED TO HIGHLIGHT THOSE BREAD-AND-BUTTER MEASURES WHICH IT CLAIMS IT HAS TAKEN ON BEHALF OF THE POORER SECTIONS OF JAMAICAN SOCIETY. IT HAS LAID HEAVY EMPHASIS ON SUCH PUTATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS:

- ESTABLISHMENT OF A MINIMUM WAGE
- EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN
- REDUCING THE VOTING AGE FROM 23 TO 18
- ABOLITION OF SCHOOL FEES
- INCREASED PRICES FOR FARM PRODUCE
- GREATER BENEFITS FROM BAUXITE MINING
- LAND DISTRIBUTION THROUGH LEASE OR UNDER COOPERATIVES

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- THE BAUXITE LEVY
IN SUM, THE PNP IS SEEKING TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF A PARTY WHICH HAS PROVIDED SPECIFIC ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS TO THE MAJORITY OF THE JAMAICAN PEOPLE, WHETHER IN URBAN AREAS OR IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

4. THE JLP IS LEFT WITH THE TASK OF POINTING OUT TO THE ELECTORATE THE HIGH COST OF THE PNP'S PRO-

GRAMS, WHETHER IN ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL TERMS. ITS SPOKESMEN STRESS THE VERY SERIOUS ECONOMIC STRAITS IN WHICH JAMAICA NOW FINDS ITSELF, AND ENDEAVOR TO ARGUE THAT HOWEVER MUCH EXTERNAL CONDITIONS--SUCH AS INCREASED ENERGY COSTS AND THE EFFECT OF WORLD RECESSION--MAY HAVE AFFECTED JAMAICA, THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED TO MANAGE THE ECONOMY INTELLIGENTLY. MOREOVER, THE JLP SEEKS TO HIGHLIGHT--TO THE EXTENT IT MAY SO DO UNDER THE EXISTING STATE OF EMERGENCY--THE PRICE THE PNP HAS COMPELLED JAMAICANS TO BEAR POLITICALLY BY ITS STRATEGY OF STRESSING CLASS DIFFERENCES. (OF COURSE, MUCH OF THE JLP CLAIM IS DIRECTED AT WOOING THOSE ELEMENTS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED THE PNP BECAUSE SUCH SUPPORT WAS SEEN AS DEFINING ONESSELF AS AN INTELLECTUAL*)

5. BOTH PARTIES ARE OUT ON THE HUSTINGS, BUT SO FAR IT HAS BEEN THE JLP--FREED FROM THE ROUTINE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICE-- WHICH HAS BEEN DOING THE MORE INTENSIVE GRASS-ROOTS CAMPAIGNING. BUT IT HAS VERY GOOD REASONS FOR SO DOING. WHILE THE PNP HAS NOT BEEN WORKING THE COUNTRYSIDE AS CLOSELY AS THE JLP, NEITHER MUST IT DO SO. RATHER, TH LEADING FIGURES IN THE RULING PARTY--AND MOST PARTICULARLY PRIME MINISTER MANLEY--HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MOVE ABOUT AND TO BE SEEN TO BE DOING THINGS. SCHOOLS ARE DEDICATED, HOUSES MADE AVAILABLE TO WORKERS, ROADS OPENED, ELECTRIC LINES INAUGURATED. THESE EVENTS CAPTURE ATTENTION BOTH LOCALLY AND IN THE NATIONAL PRESS, AND ALLOW THE PNP TO CLAIM THAT IT HAS BEEN THE BENEFACOR OF THE JAMAICAN PEOPLE.

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6. IF THE JLP HAS SIMPLY TO WORK HARDER TO CAPTURE ATTENTION AND THUS MUST WORK MORE DELIGENTLY AT THE GRASS-ROOTS LEVEL, IT ALSO HAS ANOTHER REASON FOR ITS INTENSIVE CAMPAIGNING. BASED ON ANNOUNCEMENTS TO DATE, IT NOW APPEARS THAT THE CANDIDATES OF THE PNP WILL BE FAR BETTER KNOWN THAN THOSE OF THE JLP. THE PNP PRESENTLY HAS 35 MEMBERS IN THE POPULARLY-ELECTED HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. OF THESE 28 ARE EXPECTED TO SEEK RE-ELECTION, AND ALL BUT ONE OF THESE WILL BE RUNNING IN THE SEATS THEY NOW HOLD. MOREOVER, AMONG ITS CANDIDATES ARE THREE WHO WERE IN THE FIELD IN 1972. IN ADDITION, AMONG ITS 29 NEW CANDIDATES WILL BE SUCH YOUNGER BUT PROMINENT FIGURES AS SENATOR

ARNOLD BERTRAM, PNP GENERAL SECRETARY D.K. DUNCAN
AND SENATOR HUGH SMALL. ON THE JLP SIDE, OF THE
PRESENT FIFTEEN SITTING MEMBERS, ONLY TEN WILL
BE SEEKING ELECTION. WHILE THE OPPOSITION PARTY
WILL FIELD TWO--AND POSSIBLE THREE-CANDIDATES
WHO STOOD UNSUCCESSFULLY IN 1972, THE REMAINING
47 OR 48 CANDIDATES WILL BE SEEKING PARLIAMENTARY
OFFICE FOR THE FIRST TIME. THUS, THE JLP HAS THE
SPECIAL AND DIFFICULT TASK OF DEMONSTRATING THAT
ITS MEMBERS ARE FIT TO GOVERN JAMAICA EVEN THOUGH
ONLY A FEW OF ITS CANDIDATES CAN CLAIM EXPERIENCE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KINGSTON 5054

IN THE CONDUCT OF NATIONAL AFFAIRS. (IT IS
INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT JLP SOURCES STRESS THAT
IF THEIR PARTY WINS, ITS MINISTRY WILL BE SIGNI-
FICANTLY SMALLER THAN THE PRESENT ONE. WHILE THEY
DESCRIBE THIS AS A VIRTUE, IT IS JUST AS MUCH A
NECESSITY.) THUS, THE JLP HAS HAD AN ADDED REASON
FOR ITS ASSIDUOUS CULTIVATION OF THE FURTHEST
REACHES OF EACH CONSTITUENCY.

7. THE FACT THAT HALF OF THE PNP'S CANDIDATES WILL BE INCUMBENTS SUGGESTS THAT FOR ALL OF ITS CLAIMS TO TAKING JAMAICA DOWN A NEW PATH TO DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM, IT IS NOT YET READY TO JETTISON THOSE AMONG ITS MORE PRAGMATIC-- AND OFTEN CONSERVATIVE-- MEMBERS. ALL OF THE PRESENT MINISTERS ARE RUNNING; FOUR OF THE PRESENT SIX PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES DRAWN FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ARE RUNNING; AND ONLY FIVE OF THE PRESENT PNP MEMBERS IN THE HOUSE ARE RETIRING OR HAVE FAILED TO GAIN TICKETS.

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8. THE CAMPAIGNING WILL BEGIN IN DEAD EARNEST WHEN THE NEW CONSTITUENCIES ARE CREATED AND, FOLLOWING A CALL FOR ELECTIONS, THE PARTIES FORMALLY NOMINATE THEIR CANDIDATES. MOST MONEY REMAINS ON A PRE-CHRISTMAS POLL, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE STILL THOSE WHO THINK IT MUST AWAIT THE NEW YEAR (E G.; SEE KINGSTON 5006). HOWEVER, THE PNP HAS SCHEDULED A MONSTER RALLY IN MONTEGO BAY THIS COMING SUNDAY (NOV 21) AND THE ALMOST UNIVERSAL SPECULATION IS THAT PRIME MINISTER WILL ANNOUNCE THE POLLING DATE, AND SET IT FOR MID-DECEMBER.
GERARD

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